

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

191155Z Sep 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 001690

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR DRL AND EUR/CACEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL AM

SUBJECT: RADICAL OPPOSITION PARTY SPLITS OVER
"REVOLUTION"

(U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect
accordingly.

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) On August 30 Armenia's radical opposition Republic party split, ending a year of increasingly vocal disagreements between pro-Western party leader Aram Z. Sargsian and pro-Russian Albert Bazeyan (former party chairman and former Yerevan mayor). Despite the split (both Sargsian and Bazeyan are members of the National Assembly) and loss of some regional party structures, we expect that Sargsian will be able to hold the Republic party together, while strengthening its ideological unity. End Summary.

SHOUTING REVOLUTION DOES NOT CAUSE ONE

¶2. (SBU) On August 30, seven of the fifteen-member ruling board of Armenia's radical opposition Republic party expressed their disagreement with the party leader Aram Z. Sargsian by leaving the party. Following this Albert Bazeyan and Vagharsak Harutyunyan (another member of the ruling board and former Defense Minister) released sharply critical statements, saying that recent Republic party positions were unacceptable -- in particular the party's stated hopes to resolve the internal problems of the country with foreign (i.e., U.S.) assistance, the unrealistic evaluation of the existing political situation, and regular, "empty promises" of revolution. Bazeyan's breakaway from the Republic party (although he remains part of the Justice Bloc) leaves Sargsian as the sole Republic Party member in the 131-seat National Assembly. (Note: Since Sargsian is continuing his boycott of the National Assembly, this has little real relevance. End Note.)

PARTY CLAIMS BREAKAWAY WAS ON GOVERNMENT ORDERS

¶3. (SBU) Bazeyan claimed that 75 percent the regional and 50 percent of the primary structures of the 6000 member party had walked out with the break-away leadership. Sargsian, however, insisted that the defection was minimal, and hinted that Bazeyan, who did not like Sargsian's pro-Western political orientation, was acting on the government's orders. We expect that, despite the organizational losses including regional offices in Gyumri, Arabkir, Ashtarak and Etchmiadzin, Sargsian will be able to keep the party together, and strengthen its ideological unity.

¶4. (SBU) Republic Party members Artak Zeynalyan and Gegham Harutyunyan told us that, in the party's opinion, Bazeyan's move was "orchestrated by the authorities." They also claimed that not only has there not been a major party defection, but that people are joining the party "to express their support." A USAID implementer also insisted that Bazeyan's comments about the outflow were false, only Bazeyan's personal network of friends and relatives left the party, according to the implementer. He noted, however, that Aram Sargsian is currently touring the regions to ensure regional support for the party. The only major fight, according to the implementer, is around the Gyumri branch of the party, where support is about even for Sargsian and Bazeyan.

A GROWING CONFLICT THAT BLEW UP

15. (SBU) Disagreements between Aram Sargsian and Albert Bazeyan are not new. Until recently the Republic had two de facto leaders: Bazeyan, the chairman and organizational party leader, and Sargsian, the President and "spiritual" party leader. Bazeyan stepped down from his post in the spring of 2005 as Sargsian declared a total break with Russia, and a movement to adopt Western democratic values via a democratic revolution.

COMMENT: WHAT NEXT?

16. (SBU) Party member Artak Zeynalyan claimed that Bazeyan had hindered any "decisive action" that the Republic Party had planned, and with Bazeyan out of the way, the Republic Party is ready to start "acting." Although the Republic Party continues to call for imminent revolution, however, it has few concrete allies in sight (despite inaccurate press reports citing a proposed alliance between the Armenian National Movement and the Republic Party), and revolution does not appear to be in the cards any time soon.

EVANS